

## Message

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**Subject:** USS Lead - Press (Last Friday)

**East Chicago press clips**  
**US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs**  
**April 7, 2017**

<b>NWI Times</b>	<b>East Chicago mayor, EPA clash over West Calumet site</b>
	<b>Last remaining families set to leave West Calumet complex</b>
<b>CBS Chicago</b>	<b>Housing Authority Selling Items From Contaminated Site</b>
<b>Chicago Tribune</b>	<b>Why are we being forced out that way?' East Chicago residents</b>
<b>voice lead crisis concerns</b>	
	<b>HUD secretary Carson to visit East Chicago amid lead crisis</b>

[http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/east-chicago-mayor-epa-clash-over-west-calumet-site/article\\_e5dad310-9041-567c-af6e-a7231e7139a3.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/east-chicago-mayor-epa-clash-over-west-calumet-site/article_e5dad310-9041-567c-af6e-a7231e7139a3.html)

**East Chicago mayor, EPA clash over West Calumet site**

- Lauren Cross lauren.cross@nwi.com, 219-933-3206
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- Apr 6, 2017 Updated 8 hrs ago
  - **EAST CHICAGO** — Mayor Anthony Copeland took a shot at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday, accusing the federal agency of rushing local officials into making “rapid decisions” about the future of West Calumet, one of three contaminated neighborhoods in the EPA’s USS Lead Superfund site.
  - Deeming a new initiative Project Openness and Transparency, Copeland said he wants to first meet with neighborhood groups, faith-groups organizations and others at the federal, state and local level to address the contamination, and avenues for redevelopment, of the public housing complex site, built decades ago in the footprint of a former lead smelter.

**CHICAGO** — Mayor Anthony Copeland took a shot at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Thursday, accusing the federal agency of rushing local officials into making “rapid decisions” about the future of West Calumet, one of three contaminated neighborhoods in the EPA’s USS Lead Superfund site.

Deeming a new initiative Project Openness and Transparency, Copeland said he wants to first meet with neighborhood groups, faith-groups organizations and others at the federal, state and local level

to address the contamination, and avenues for redevelopment, of the public housing complex site, built decades ago in the footprint of a former lead smelter.

Copeland said during his State of the City speech on Wednesday he would not settle for anything short of the EPA returning the land to residential status, which would allow the city to develop the land — now owned by the East Chicago Housing Authority — into anything it wished.

Last month, Robert Kaplan, the acting regional administration for EPA Region 5, sent a letter March 22 to Copeland, asking he disclose anticipated future land use about his intentions with the soon-to-be-demolished West Calumet Housing Complex. The letter explained EPA cannot select a remediation plan until city officials provide more details.

"We need to know what the use of the property will be put to, and design the remedy on that, whether it's commercial or residential. There's a big difference if the entire site is going to be paved in concrete, be a playground, (or residential)," Kaplan told The Times last week.

Copeland, however, suggested the ball is in EPA's court. In the news release Thursday, Copeland argued the agency should disclose ongoing discussions with companies responsible for the pollution.

"I continue to be amazed that the Environmental Protection Agency would prevent the City of East Chicago from knowing what discussions and agreements they reached with those responsible for the contamination of the West Calumet neighborhood. Knowing the result of those discussions would better enable our community and the City of East Chicago to make plans for improvements in the area. This is not a time for secrecy ... It is a time to be open and transparent," Copeland said.

In a statement Thursday, the EPA said the agency continues to work closely with Copeland, having briefed a city attorney the same day the EPA secured \$16 million in funding for cleanup of zones 2 and 3 of the Superfund site.

Copeland butted heads with EPA officials last summer, when he accused the federal agency of breaking trust for not disclosing soil results — first taken in late 2014 — to the city until spring 2016.

Earlier this week, the city dug up the playground at the West Calumet Housing Complex, Janet Pope, the EPA's community involvement coordinator, told a Times staff photographer Wednesday during a tour of the complex for NAACP leaders. A video posted online by a West Calumet resident showed the dig in progress.

The city did this without notifying the EPA, and the EPA later covered the bare soil with mulch to prevent further lead exposure, Pope said during the tour. On Thursday, the city did not respond to a request for comment about the city's removal of the playground.

James Cunningham, deputy regional administrator for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Chicago, said the federal agency is conducting an environmental review of the site — a key step prior to making a determination on the local housing authority's application for demolition. HUD's environmental review is separate from a review determining future land use, HUD has said.

In a letter to HUD Secretary Ben Carson dated March 15, Copeland said the city "has yet to receive solid answers" as to whether HUD, the EPA, polluters or another entity will fund the demolition of West Calumet. Copeland note the city has requested the site be cleaned to residential standards, with foundations removed and "the land completely cleaned in order to protect the public from further exposures."

Copeland also told Carson in the letter the city has submitted to HUD two applications, one to demolish the complex and another seeking emergency capital fund dollars.

HUD last year told The Times that ECHA will continue to get its full annual capital grant funding for the West Calumet property, even after its vacated, until the property is demolished.

After demolition, the ECHA will then receive demolition transition funding for five years, equal to the value they would receive if the property were still standing. Those dollars could be used for actual demolition, HUD said in September.

*The Times staff photographer Jonathan Miano contributed to this report.*

[http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/last-remaining-families-set-to-leave-west-calumet-complex/article\\_7b72da38-5521-5ae1-9d22-6e129e8502bd.html](http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/last-remaining-families-set-to-leave-west-calumet-complex/article_7b72da38-5521-5ae1-9d22-6e129e8502bd.html)

### **Last remaining families set to leave West Calumet complex**

- Lauren Cross [lauren.cross@nwi.com](mailto:lauren.cross@nwi.com), 219-933-3206

EAST CHICAGO — Last summer, the West Calumet Housing Complex was a much different place, teeming with children chasing each other through yards.

Now the East Chicago neighborhood is hardly recognizable, with trash cans tipped over in the streets and unwanted possessions abandoned on the sidewalk. Homes have been boarded up with plywood and marked with a blue dot, signaling vacancy.

The low-income, public housing complex, built in the early 1970s on the footprint of a former lead smelter, is the most highly contaminated area of the Environmental Protection Agency's USS Lead Superfund site.

Families first learned last summer that they were being forced to relocate because of the lead and arsenic in the soil. Since that time, more than 1,000 people — including 670 children — have scattered to new homes across Northwest Indiana, to neighboring states, and as far as Texas and Nevada. A few dozen families remain.

It's a ghost town that was once a close-knit community, Lethette Howard said.

"I got to know a lot of people with my kids going to school with their kids. West Calumet, it's a community. We looked out for each other," Howard said.

### **'I got tired of looking'**

Moving to her sister's house in Gary is not what Howard envisioned for her family upon leaving the lead- and arsenic-contaminated complex, but it's better than moving to Chicago's gang-riddled South Side, where the East Chicago Housing Authority recently assigned her a temporary unit, with a deadline of today to pack her things and leave.

"I didn't want to rush into something and take my kids out of school in the middle of the year," Howard said, saying she will have to drive her two children to East Chicago schools every day from Gary.

Her search for affordable, subsidized housing has not been easy.

"You don't know how overwhelming it's been, to just keep dialing and dialing, trying to find a place. I'll think I've found one. Then I find out they don't accept Section 8," Howard said. "I got tired of looking."

As of Wednesday, 56 families remain at the complex, some of which are in the process of moving into a new place, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Federal and local housing officials have said it's becoming an issue of health and public safety due to the lead in the soil and the high vacancy rates.

At the end of March, ECHA staff hand delivered 10-day relocation notices, triggering protests among residents and community members. James Cunningham, HUD's regional deputy director for Chicago, said the emergency transfers have slowed in recent days. As families continue to find permanent

units, more families assigned to places in Chicago may instead be relocated to units in East Chicago or in Indiana, Cunningham said.

"HUD's goal is not to have to move people twice," Cunningham said.

Most households' relocation vouchers do not expire until the end of June. Even as they move to temporary housing, families will have about 12 more weeks to continue searching for a new home, HUD has said.

Akeesha Daniels, a mother of three, is leaving behind couches, bedding and other furniture — possessions that may otherwise carry lead dust particles into her next place. She doesn't want to chance re-contaminating the interior of her house, where two of her three sons will live.

But there are some things Daniels can't leave behind, like a box containing two of her three son's medical records, some of which date back to when her 13-year-old son was a toddler. Hundreds of pages detail countless doctor and emergency room visits for gastrointestinal issues, vomiting and other health problems. Daniels suspects lead exposure may be behind it.

"These are health problems that will follow them for the rest of their lives," Daniels said. "I don't think I'll ever feel comfortable again, wherever I move. But I have to do what I have to do."

Her new place is within the boundaries of the EPA's USS Lead Superfund site, but Daniels said she was told during the inspection process that the property is free of lead.

Daniels is among a dozen or so who filed grievances to delay forced moves and provide more time to finding safe, permanent housing. Daniels' hearing on Monday was delayed for hours due to paperwork issues, and the matter still is unresolved, she said. Daniels has a newly signed lease agreement and keys in hand, but she's still waiting on NIPSCO paperwork to be processed before moving in.

### **Grievance hearings planned**

Patricia Roman Hass, managing attorney at the Merrillville branch of the Indiana Legal Services, said the majority of her team's clients have only been offered units in Chicago.

"We are hopeful that as part of the grievance procedure appropriate units in Indiana are made available to them," Roman Hass said.

Many of her clients rely on public benefits, she said, so moving across state lines would require them to reapply.

"Most have children in schools in Indiana. The school year is almost over, ISTEP is coming. Removing them from school or having them commute an hour or hour and a half would create undue hardships," Roman Hass said.

Jalisa Wash is a 27-year-old mother of two who was born and raised in the West Calumet Housing Complex.

"This is all we know. This is home to us," Wash said. She said she wanted to stay in her hometown of East Chicago, but the lack of affordable housing forced her to look elsewhere, in Hammond. She is moving to Hammond on Monday, but leaving her childhood home won't be easy.

"It's devastating," Wash said. "This is going to be an adventure. We have no other choice but to leave. I don't want to, but we have to."

<http://chicago.cbslocal.com/2017/04/06/east-chicago-ind-housing-authority-sells-appliances-from-lead-contaminated-site/>

**Housing Authority Selling Items From Contaminated Site**

April 6, 2017 5:01 PM By Dorothy Tucker

**(CBS)** — Akeesha Daniels is among the last residents to leave the West Calumet housing complex in East Chicago, Ind.

When she finally heads out, she's leaving most of her furniture behind.

"All of the dressers, night stands and everything will be left," she tells CBS 2's Dorothy Tucker.

"Because I'm scared it's all contaminated with lead."

The EPA found dangerously high levels of lead in Daniels' home — 32,000 parts per million. They found similar results throughout the complex and deemed it unsafe for residents.

Yet on the East Chicago Housing Authority website, the agency is selling appliances from the units. Almost everything is for sale "as is": air-conditioning units, furnaces, refrigerators, stoves, even kitchen sinks, which costs \$15 each.

"They're putting everybody out and they're demolishing the whole complex. That would make you think everything involved with this complex is contaminated," Daniels says.

CBS 2 used a simple kit from the hardware store. The results showed no lead contamination on Daniels' appliances.

Off camera, an employee of the housing authority says appliances will be cleaned before they are sold.

But community organizer Carlyle Edwards is concerned about hard-to-reach places in stoves that might be contaminated with lead.

"What they ought to do is just dispose of them properly," Edwards says.

The housing authority declined comment.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-naacp-lead-st-0407-20170406-story.html>

**'Why are we being forced out that way?' East Chicago residents voice lead crisis concerns**

Michelle L. Quinn Post-Tribune

West Calumet resident Candice Cobbs is at the point where she just can't endure any more bad news.

Cobbs and her four children — including her 21-year-old son — are still trying to find housing suitable for all of them outside East Chicago's West Calumet lead zone. That hasn't been easy.

"I've looked into so many places for Section 8, but I am not moving my family to no raggedy place, so what am I to do," Cobbs said Wednesday during an listening session sponsored by the Twin City Ministerial Alliance and the State NAACP at First Baptist Church in East Chicago. "I have eight rooms of furniture, and you want to tell me I have to move into a three-bedroom house?"

"Why are we being forced out that way?"

Cobbs' stress isn't unique to public health crises such as the one that's going on in East Chicago, according to Pamela Pugh, chief public health adviser for the City of Flint, Mich. She told the group she hopes the agencies involved in the remediation recognize their pain and plan for help.

"In Flint, there have been studies on social and emotional health — 66 percent of adults showed worse mental health, and 50 percent of children did because of the crisis," Pugh said. "We know the social impacts, and I hope that is addressed, because that's what I'm hearing here."

Residents were encouraged to express their concerns to the panel — among them representatives of the East Chicago Housing Authority, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, NAACP and Indiana Civil Rights Commission — in order to "add voices" to their plight as well as come up with an action plan. Chief among the data recorded were health concerns, both physical and emotional.

Resident Maritza Lopez, who's lived in the superfund footprint her entire life, said her family had no idea what surrounded them, even though she's sure there were "agencies that knew." She blames health problems on the lead contamination.

"My heart stops whenever it wants, and I have seizures. I started losing teeth with parts of my jaw bone at 18. I had an aneurysm at 10, arthritis at 12 and was disabled at 38," Lopez told the panel. For residents like Lopez, Bishop Tavis Grant, senior pastor for Greater First Baptist Church and panelist, wondered why St. Catherine Hospital hasn't been included in any conversation about the crisis.

"You can choose to go to Community or you can choose to go to Methodist, but last I checked, St. Catherine is right here, and (it) should have the best of the best of the best for people," Grant said. "This is fundamental, before the EPA, HUD and city does anything else."

Residents were also concerned about what will happen to the area once it's been remediated. James Cunningham, deputy regional administrator for HUD in Chicago, said East Chicago has requested the area be allowed to be redeveloped into affordable housing once it's safe.

Cunningham, however, said HUD hasn't decided whether that'll be the case, and he isn't necessarily sold on the idea that it should if it is. He said he would prefer building more affordable housing – including rental properties – in other places in the city and around Northwest Indiana.

That would be fine if West Calumet residents got first choice, according to Carla Dunlap. As it stands now, however, many of the residents feel like they've been kicked out with nowhere to go.

"I just don't understand how they're going to make these people be put out and then rebuild," said Dunlap, a 50-year East Chicago resident.

Cunningham said 19 people applied for the grievance process by the deadline, and their housing status won't be affected during the process.

**<http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-carson-visit-st-0407-20170406-story.html>**

### **HUD secretary Carson to visit East Chicago amid lead crisis**

By Craig Lyons

April 6, 2017

Ben Carson, secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, is planning to visit East Chicago to learn about the city's issues with lead and arsenic contamination, according to an Indiana senator's announcement.

U.S. Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-South Bend, announced Thursday that Carson agreed to visit the USS Lead Superfund site, which includes the Calumet neighborhood, and the West Calumet Housing Complex. The announcement that Carson will visit East Chicago comes days after Scott Pruitt, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said he plans to visit the city April 19.

"I was pleased to receive an assurance from Secretary Carson that he intends to visit East Chicago to hear directly from the families whose lives have been uprooted and put at risk due to the lead contamination of the West Calumet Housing Complex," Donnelly said in a statement. "As I've said before, the federal government has a responsibility to help provide a long-term solution that ensures the health and safety of the more than 300 families that recently lived in the complex. Secretary Carson's visit will provide firsthand insight and help him understand the housing needs of those impacted."

Donnelly's office did not have details Thursday on the specifics of Carson's visit, including if it would coincide with Pruitt's planned April 19 visit.

The remaining residents of the West Calumet Housing Complex started being transferred out of their homes at the Superfund site last week. HUD and the East Chicago Housing Authority agreed to move residents to units elsewhere in the city or in neighboring Illinois.

HUD sought to minimize the number of residents who want to stay in Indiana being temporarily relocated to Chicago. HUD officials said 19 residents filed a grievance contesting their transfers and will be able to stay at the complex until those issues are resolved.

Sens. Donnelly and Todd Young, R-Bloomington, and U.S. Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Merrillville, invited Pruitt and Carson to visit East Chicago to see why the agencies' continued support is necessary.

"We think that visiting with the residents in the impacted areas to get a firsthand perspective of the challenges facing the community will help you as you lead your agencies' response efforts," the

delegation wrote in the letter. "Children from the area have tested positive for dangerous levels of lead in their blood and the area's residents now have to worry how their own backyards are impacting their families' health. It is a situation that needs continued assistance from the federal government."